

Message Text

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64/51

ACTION NEA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5825

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 6835

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - T E X T

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MOPS, PK, US, IN, UR, AF

SUBJECT: BHUTTO ON CURRENT PROBLEMS WITH INDIANS, AFGHANS AND
SOVIETS

SUMMARY: AFTER LETTING BHUTTO IN HIS TRAVELS KNOW INDIRECTLY
THAT I WAS UNHAPPY OVER PUBLIC STANCE HE WAS TAKING RE SECURITY
MATTERS AND INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN, HE INVITED ME TO VISIT HIM
IN PARACHINAR. AFTER A LONG DISCUSSION WITH HIM I FEEL
THINGS ARE AT LEAST SOMEWHAT STILL ON THE TRACK. END SUMMARY.

1. SOME DAYS AGO I EXPRESSED MY CONCERN TO AGHA SHAHI OVER
TONE OF BHUTTO'S RECENT INTERVIEW WITH NEW YORK TIMES
AND HIS SPEECHES IN THE FRONTIER AREA WHICH SEEMED TO ME TO
UNNECESSARILY STIR THINGS UP IN THE SUB-CONTINENT AND MAKE
IT HARDER FOR HIS FRIENDS IN WASHINGTON TO PURSUE POLICIES
FAVORABLE TO PAKISTAN. THIS WAS REPORTED VERY BRIEFLY

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IN ISLAMABAD 6647 (NOTAL). I DID THIS WITH SOME HESITATION

AS IT IS OBVIOUSLY NOT GOOD MANNERS OR TACTICS TO BE CRITICAL OF BHUTTO INDIRECTLY, BUT I FELT STRONGLY THAT HE EITHER WAS GETTING BAD ADVICE OR LETTING THE EXPEDIENCY OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSUMPTION HARM HIS FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN A MANNER AGAINST ALMOST EVERYONE'S INTERESTS. IT ALSO SEEMED TO ME THAT WE WERE GOING THROUGH A PERIOD OF MOUNTING SUSPICION HERE OVER COMBINED SOVIET, INDIAN AND AFGHAN INTENTIONS WHICH WAS FEEDING UPON ITSELF TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT AN OUTSIDE VOICE MIGHT BE USEFUL.

2. MONDAY MORNING I RECEIVED A CALL THAT THE BHUTTOS WANTED MY WIFE AND ME TO COME HAVE DINNER WITH THEM AT PARACHINAR, A REMOTE (AND BEAUTIFUL) FRONTIER TOWN WITHIN SIGHT OF THE AFGHAN BORDER. IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER, AZIZ AHMED ALSO ASKED TO SEE ME FOR A DISCUSSION ON WHICH I HAVE HAD NO OPPORTUNITY TO REPORT. IN THE PROCESS, I ALSO TOLD AZIZ OF MY CONCERNS AS EXPRESSED TO SHAHI IN ABOVE REFTEL. IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER WE DROVE TWO HOURS TO KOHAT AND WERE PICKED UP BY CHOPPER FOR THE FLIGHT INTO PARACHINAR. THE PARTY CONSISTED OF THE PIRZADAS, AZIZ AHMED AND AGHA SHAHI AND NEW CHIEF OF STAFF OF AIR FORCE ALI KHAN AND HIS WIFE. SHORTLY AFTER WE LANDED AZIZ AND SHAHI HAD A DISCUSSION WITH BHUTTO AND THEN HE ASKED TO SEE ME ALONE. WE HAD ABOUT AN HOUR TOGETHER. HE WAS HIS USUAL FRIENDLY SELF.

3. IT WAS QUITE OBVIOUS THAT AZIZ AND SHAHI HAD BRIEFED HIM WELL. HE STARTED OUT BY EXPLAINING THAT HE WAS MAKING HIS TRIP TO THE NORTHWEST FRONTIER PROVINCE TO FURTHER CONSOLIDATE THE STANDING OF THE GOVERNMENT AMONG THE PEOPLE OF THE AREA, TO COUNTER SUBVERSIVE MACHINATIONS OF THE AFGHANS WITHIN THE PROVINCE, AND FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL PURPOSES. HE SAID HE THOUGHT HE WAS GETTING THROUGH TO THE PEOPLE IN THE AREA BETTER THAN HE EVER HAD BEFORE, AND HE CONSIDERED THIS IMPORTANT IN THE LONG RUN FOR PAKISTAN. HE SAID HE REALIZED HE HAD USED SOME PRETTY BLUNT WORDS BUT ASKED THAT I BEAR IN MIND THAT THOSE ARE THE ONLY TYPE WORDS THAT MOST OF HIS TRIBESMEN AUDIENCE WOULD UNDERSTAND. I THINK IT WAS A USEFUL DISCUSSION IN WHICH I OF COURSE OFFERED NO VIEWS AS TO WHAT HE SHOULD DO ON INTERNAL PAKISTANI AFFAIRS. NEVERTHELESS, HE GOT THE POINT AND READILY ACCEPTED
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IT AS HE KNEW I HAD ONLY A FRIENDLY CONCERN AS REGARDS ITS FOREIGN POLICY IMPLICATIONS.

4. I LEFT THE INITIATIVE WITH HIM AND HE TURNED TO SUBJECT OF TROOP MOVEMENTS IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, KNOWING FULL WELL THAT I WOULD TELL HIM THAT WE HAD NO EVIDENCE OF OUR OWN TO SUPPORT THEIR CONCLUSIONS. IN THE DISCUSSION I TOLD HIM THAT I SUPPOSED THE INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION

THAT THEY HAD MOST PROBABLY DID NOT DIFFER SUBSTANTIALLY FROM OUR OWN, BUT IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT WE REACHED DIFFERENT OVERALL CONCLUSIONS FROM IT THAN THEY DID. I GAVE HIM SOME EXAMPLES OF THIS HAPPENING IN THE PAST TO WHICH HE READILY AGREED. HE ALSO AGREED THAT SUSPICION WAS PROBABLY THE PRIMARY INGREDIENT THAT LED HIS PEOPLE TOWARDS ACCEPTING RUMOR AND UNSUPPORTED, OR UNEXPLAINED, INFORMATION AS FACT.

5. I TOLD BHUTTO THAT THE INFORMATION AZIZ AHMED HAD PASSED TO ME AND SEVERAL OTHER AMBASSADORS RE COMBINED THREATENING TROOP MOVEMENT IN BOTH INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN WAS WORRISOME INDEED. I HAD FELT THAT I HAD NO ALTERNATIVE OTHER THAN TO CHECK IT OUT AS BEST I COULD, AND HAD INDICATED TO AZIZ THAT I WOULD DO SO. HE SAID I HAD OBVIOUSLY DONE THE RIGHT THING. I THEN TOLD HIM THAT JUST PRIOR TO MY HURRIED DEPARTURE FROM THE EMBASSY I HAD HAD BRIEF PAPERS PREPARED, BASED UPON ALL INFORMATION THAT WE HAD FROM ALL SOURCES, ABOUT HOW WE SAW THE CURRENT SITUATION IN INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN AS REGARDS MATTERS AZIZ HAD RAISED. I SAID THE PAPERS DID NOT CONTAIN FACTS, BUT OUR CONCLUSIONS FROM THE FACTS AS WE SAW THEM. WE DREW HEAVILY ON NEW DELHI'S HELPFUL 9351 IN THE PROCESS, LEAVING OUT ANY REFERENCE TO DISCUSSION WITH THE INDIANS ON THE SUBJECT, THE HOT LINE EXCHANGE AND OB MATERIAL, ETC., AND ALSO ON KABUL 4361. I LET BHUTTO READ THE PAPERS. HE SAID THAT I COULD TELL MY MAN WHO WROTE THEM THAT HE AGREED COMPLETELY WITH HIS CONCLUSIONS ON INDIA AND PARTICULARLY ON THE PACE OF EVENTS IN KASHMIR (WHICH IN ESSENCE, OF COURSE WAS THAT NOTHING SEEMED TO BE GOING ON THAT WAS WORRISOME IN THE SHORT RUN). THIS BOTH SURPRISED AND PLEASED ME AS IT WOULD BE SOMEWHAT AWKWARD FOR HIM TO CONTINUE HIS PUBLIC STANCE ON THE TROOP MOVEMENTS MATTER AFTER THAT ADMISSION TO ME. I WAS NOT ABLE TO FIND OUT WHAT LIES BEHIND THIS APPARENT

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INCONSISTENCY. IT MAY BE THAT THEY NOW HAVE REVISED THEIR INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES, THAT HE HAS RECEIVED ASSURANCES THAT I KNOW NOTHER ABOUT OR THAT THE INDIAN INITIATIVE WITH THE HOT LINE COMMUNICATION HAS REASSURED HIM.

6. BHUTTO SAID HE WAS LESS SURE ABOUT MY PAPER ON AFGHANISTAN, WHICH ALSO TOOK THE VIEW THAT WE DID NOT THINK ANYTHING SERIOUS WAS GOING ON RE TROOP MOVEMENTS, OR OTHER MILITARY PREPARATIONS, BUT SAID THAT WE MIGHT BE RIGHT.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5826

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7. AT ONE POINT HE REFERRED TO ONE OF OUR PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS IN WHICH HE SAID THE SIMLA PROCESS MIGHT BE STARTED IN SEPTEMBER. PARTLY AS IF THINKING TO HIMSELF HE SAID MAYBE IT COULD BE QUICKER THAN THAT. HE SAID HE HAD BEGUN THE PROCESS OF PREPARING THE PUBLIC FOR A RESUMPTION OF THE TALKS IN A PRESS CONFERENCE HE HAD HELD BEFORE MY ARRIVAL. HE SAID HE HAD MADE THE REMARK IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION RE THE SIMLA PROCESS THAT THE TIME WOULD COME SOON TO PUT INDIA "TO THE TEST" ON THIS ISSUE. I TOLD HIM I WAS DELIGHTED TO HEAR IT. HE SEEMED TO THINK THIS MIGHT CAUSE SOME RESPONSE FROM THE INDIANS BUT WE BOTH AGREED THAT WE WOULD HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE EXACTLY WHAT WORDING THE PRESS USED. THE NEXT DAY WHEN WE SAW THE PRESS TREATMENT I SAID I THOUGHT IT WAS MUCH TOO VAGUE AND TOO SURROUNDED WITH OTHER THINGS TO EXPECT ANY RESPONSE. (LAST NIGHT I SAW A TELEVISION RE-RUN OF THIS PRESS CONFERENCE. HE WAS COOL AND COMPOSED AND SPOKE SLOWLY AND DELIBERATELY. I AGREE THAT HE DID IN FACT GIVE IMPRESSION OF WANTING TO PUT INDIA "TO THE TEST" THROUGH EARLY RESUMPTION OF SIMLA

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TALKS. THE LOCAL PRESS, I THINK THROUGH SHEER INCOMPETENCE, IN NO WAY DID JUSTICE TO HIS ACTUAL REMARKS AND ITS RE-PLAY IN NEITHER INDIA OR AFGHANISTAN WILL BE VERY GOOD.)

8. BHUTTO REMAINS VERY MUCH PREOCCUPIED WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND I BELIEVE AT TIMES ACTUALLY WORKS HIMSELF INTO A MOD WHERE HE THINKS THE ODDS ARE BETTER THAN EVEN THAT THEY ARE WORKING ON SOME GRAND DESIGN WITH INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN TO THE DETRIMENT OF PAKISTAN. IN HIS ONLY SLIGHTLY EMOTIONAL REMARK OF THE EVENING HE SAID "IF THAT IS EVER ACTUALLY PROVEN, I WON'T HESITATE ONE MOMENT BEFORE BREAKING RELATIONS WITH THEM." I TOOK A CAUTIONARY STANCE ON THIS ONE, URGING THAT HE BE REALLY SURE OF HIS FACTS BEFORE ANY SUCH MAJOR MOVE. ALSO, THE VERY QUICK "RUBBING IT IN" EFFORT OF THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR HERE THAT NOTHING RE THIS AREA OR PAKISTAN WAS DISCUSSED AT ALL AT THE MOSCOW SUMMIT HAS HAD A DISTURBING EFFECT ON BHUTTO. IF THERE IS ANYTHING TO SAY ON THIS ONE IT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL IF THE SECRETARY COULD SEE YAQUB KHAN IN WASHINGTON (MEMBERS OF THE SMALL PAK-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY WHO HAVE VISITED RUSSIA RECENTLY ARE BRINGING BACK WORD FROM SOVIET OFFICIALS THAT THE U.S. HAS AGREED WITH THE SOVIETS THAT THEY SHOULD HEAVILY ARM INDIA TO INSURE THAT IT KEEPS THE PEACE IN THE SUB-CONTINENT).

9. THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION OF HIS RECENT NEW YORK TIMES INTERVIEW AS I KNEW HE HAD GOT THE WORD OF MY CONCERN OVER THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS IN WASHINGTON AT THIS SOMEWHAT DRAMATIC EXPOSITION ON THREATS TO PAKISTAN AND THE NEED FOR U.S. ARMS. TIME WAS RUNNING OUT, AND I THOUGHT IT PROBABLY BEST TO LEAVE IT AT THAT ANYWAY.

10. THE EMBASSY SENT A MESSAGE YESTERDAY (ISLAMABAD 6803) WHICH SPECULATES ON THE REASONS WHY BHUTTO HAS BEEN TAKING SUCH A STRONG PUBLIC POSTURE ON SECURITY NEEDS AND ABOUT PAKISTAN'S NEIGHBORS AND THESE COMMENTS WILL NOT BE REPEATED HERE. IT DOES NOT CONTAIN MY FEELING THAT THE INFLUENCE OF AZIZ AHMED MAY BE AN IMPORTANT FACTOR. AZIZ BY NATURE SEES EVERYONE GANGING UP ON PAKISTAN AND IS A VERY HARD LINER AS REGARDS INDIA. AGHA SHAHI, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS A MODERATE AND THEIR SEPARATE ADVICE TO BHUTTO IS SECRET

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OFTEN RADICALLY DIFFERENT. I HAVE A FEELING THAT AZIZ AHMED WENT OFF THE DEEP END IN HIS BRIEFINGS TO BHUTTO RE CURRENT PAK INTELLIGENCE AND THAT BHUTTO NOW KNOWS IT. AGHA SHAHI TOLD ME THAT HE HAD TOLD BHUTTO THAT I WAS CONCERNED AND MY INVITATION HAD SPRUNG FROM THIS. I CAN'T HELP BUT SPECULATE THAT AZIZ WAS IN ON THIS TRIP TO GET THE WORD THAT BHUTTO AGREED WITH ME GENERALLY ON THESE MATTERS,

AS I KNOW THAT NO OTHER FOREIGN POLICY MATTER WAS DISCUSSED.
IT MAY ALSO BE TRUE THAT AZIZ REASONED THAT SOME PUBLIC
ATTENTION MIGHT HELP AS REGARDS GETTING U.S. EQUIPMENT.
HE IS SMARTING OVER THIS ISSUE INDEED, SAYING THAT
NOW THAT WE HAVE CHANGED OUR MIDDLE EAST POLICIES,
PAKISTAN IS THE ONLY CASE IN THE WORLD WHERE THE U.S. IS
NOT FORTHCOMING.

11. IN SPITE OF THE LACK OF SPECIFICS IN THIS MESSAGE
THE DISCUSSION WAS A GOOD ONE AND I HOPE IT MAY PROVE
USEFUL IN THE FUTURE. TIME WILL TELL. ANYWAY, IT WAS
GOOD TO SEE THAT PART OF PAKISTAN AND WE HAD A NICE DINNER
AND ACCOMPANYING CULTURAL SHOW. IT WAS A WEIRD FEELING
TO BE SITTING THERE PRACTICALLY ON THE BORDER OF AFGHANISTAN
IN A FULLY STOCKED BAR AT THE CLUB WHICH SOMEHOW REMINDED
ME OF A PLACE I USED TO KNOW ON WASHINGTON'S WATERFRONT.
PERHAPS IN THAT SETTING IT WAS THE UNEXPECTED NUDE PAINTING
OVER THE BAR. BHUTTO SAID I SHOULD HAVE SEEN THE ONE THEY TOOK
DOWN BECAUSE OF OUR PRESENCE. I SUGGESTED HE ASK THEM TO PUT IT
BACK. HE DID, AND THEY DID.

12. BHUTTO ASKED THAT I RIDE BACK WITH THEM AND WE
ATTEMPTED TO CHOPPER BUT WERE FORCED BACK TO PESHAWAR
BECAUSE OF BAD WEATHER. AFTER LUNCH THERE WE RETURNED
IN HIS FALCON TO PINDI. ON THE PLANE HE SAID HE WAS THINKING
OF INVITING MRS. GANDHI OVER FOR A VISIT WHEN THE WEATHER
GOT BETTER THIS WINTER. I ASKED IF THIS WOULD BE
PRECEDED BY LOWER LEVEL TALKS AND HE SAID THAT THIS SHOULD
OF COURSE BE DONE. POLITICIAN THAT HE IS, HIS CONVERSATION
MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE WAS THINKING ABOUT JUST HOW HE SHOULD
GO ABOUT RESTARTING THE SIMLA PROCESS IN A MANNER ACCEPTABLE
FROM HIS PERSONAL DOMESTIC POLITICAL POINT OF VIEW. I WAS
OF NO HELP TO HIM, AS I DIDN'T HAVE ANY BRIGHT IDEAS, AND
THOUGHT IT BEST IN ANY EVENT THAT HE TACKLE THAT ONE ALONE.

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